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STUDIES

IN

EARLY AMERICAN HISTORY

THE

Legends of Jekyl Island

BY

FRANKLIN H. HEAD

*Magna est veritas, et prevalebit.*

Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again,  
The eternal years of God are hers,  
But Error, wounded, writhes with pain,  
And dies amid her worshippers.

CHICAGO

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Studies in  
Early American History.

THE LEGENDS OF  
JEKYL ISLAND.

... . . . BY . . . .

FRANKLIN H. HEAD.

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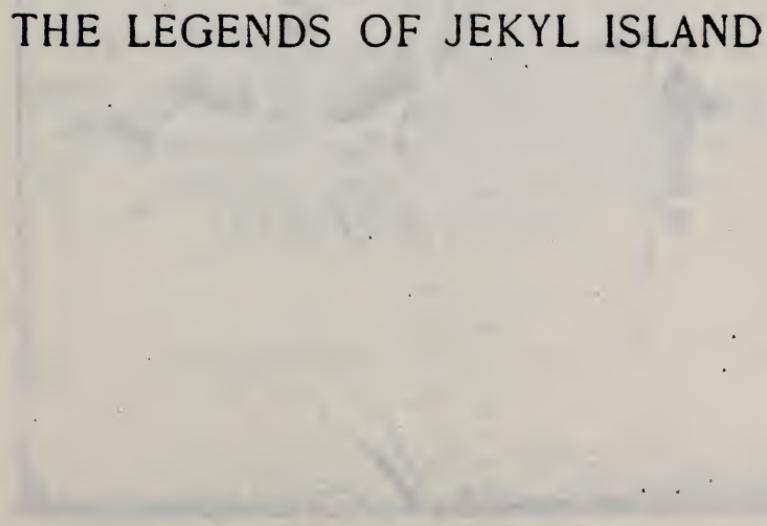
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# THE LEGENDS OF JEKYL ISLAND

By  
John H. Johnson  
Illustrations by  
John H. Johnson  
and  
John H. Johnson





GEN. JAMES E. OGLETHORPE.

*By permission, from the original painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, now owned by Mr. Clarence King, of New York.*



# The Legends of Jersey Island.

SOME years ago I wrote the above article, which I intended for publication in the *Journal of American History*. It was never offered for publication by any editor, and I have now given it to my friend, **EDWARD G. MASON**, **PRESIDENT OF THE CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY**, **AND AUTHOR OF "THE HISTORY OF ILLINOIS,"** **NOT ALONE AS A MARK OF HIGH PERSONAL ESTEEM, BUT IN RECOGNITION OF HIS EQUALY PAINSTAKING AND ACCURATE LABORS IN SIMILAR FIELDS OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH.**



## The Legends of Jekyl Island.

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SOME years since, during the same week, I heard Jekyl Island described from two standpoints. It was soon after its purchase by an association of gentlemen forming the well-known Jekyl Island Club. Two of my friends gave me a glowing account of this newly found island of Atlantis. A semi-tropical island off the coast of southern Georgia ; 17,000 acres of beautiful land, mostly covered with choice timber, 1,400 deer ranging the forest, green turtle marching in uninterrupted procession along the silvery beach, a lake of 500 acres so packed with terrapin as to resemble a cedar block pavement, flocks of quail and partridge darkening the air, oysters of incomparable flavor everywhere, and all purchased at an unheard of bargain, for the beggarly pittance of \$125,000.

Once in every man's life comes to him his opportunity, and my two friends felt and rejoiced that theirs had nor passed unheeded by,



for each had secured a share in this enchanted island.

A few days later I met and chatted with a man whom many of us in Chicago remember as Jim Kelly, who was on a visit to Chicago from his Florida plantation. Said Jim, "I like Florida just because I'm well there and am not well anywhere else. A man with an orange grove can get a modest living, but when it comes to doing business or making money, of course the chances in any part of the South are comparatively small. Still," continued Jim, "sometimes a man gets struck by lightning even there. I have a cousin who owned an island off the Georgia coast, 17,000 acres of sand and swamp. You couldn't raise anything on it; there was some scattering, but utterly worthless, timber. He had tried for years to sell it, to trade it off, or to mortgage it, but he couldn't do either. In fact," concluded Jim, "the whole thing wasn't worth a damn, but lately he picked up a lot of rich suckers from New York, Boston and Chicago, and sold them his Jekyl Island for \$125,000."



I recognized with interest and delight, as often before, the widely variant conclusions from the points of view; and when, in the spring of 1892, my friends King and McCagg, who were members of the club, invited me to visit the island as their guest, I accepted with delight, eager to see for myself the picture which had been before me in such contrasted lights.

I found the March climate of the island invigorating and delightful; the bridle paths and roads through the forest wisely planned and charming; the drive of a dozen miles along the firm and shining beach the joy of a lifetime. The absence of the 1,400 deer, the quail, partridges and terrapin was explained by the statement that the committee of three who visited the island prior to its purchase, had eaten them, although a tradition is still current that on a certain remote and possibly mythical Sunday, terrapin soup was served to some of the early inhabitants.

The club house was well planned for its purpose; the company choice, intellectual and in



every way agreeable. All members of the club worthy of their exalted heritage were busily employed in doing nothing and in doing it thoroughly and well. A few members who were looking about for something to do, who watched anxiously for the newspapers and sought to adulterate the atmosphere of the island, with the airs and cares of the outer world, were frowned upon, and their expulsion would have been considered, except that the consideration of even so self-evident a necessity would have required an effort. The Vice President and acting executive, of dignified and stately presence, was a man of abounding energy and fire, which was exercised daily and hourly in the transferring until the day after to-morrow of the things which should have been done yesterday. In a word, the island is an ideal resting place for the man of affairs. The visitors during my stay were largely of middle life, upon whom ease with dignity sat gracefully. Yet even there, and among them, the sprightly arrow-shooting god played havoc, and one of the loved and honored members, in



sequence thereof, met there smilingly his doom, and now wanders, no longer alone, in far away Cathay, hand in hand with his happy fate, and renews under occidental skies the dreams of his golden youth.

I found upon the island certain ruins, prehistoric, so far as the present inhabitants were informed, but concerning which sundry and contradictory legends were current. The general trend of the local folklore was that the island had once belonged to General Oglethorpe, the founder and governor of the Georgia colony. A solitary chimney was supposed to mark the site of the gubernatorial palace. Certain mounds and pits near the shore were, by the different schools of archæologists upon the island, variously claimed to represent the work of the Aztec Mound Builders, diggings for the buried treasures of Captain Kidd, and earth-works erected during the late war to protect blockade runners escaping to the Bermudas. In view of these conflicting theories, and of the lack of accurate information on the part even of the members of the Jekyl Island Club,



the antiquarian zeal, the frenzy, a la Herodotus, which, radiating from the President of the Chicago Historical Society, animates all its members, urged me to learn what I could of the history of the island, and I place before my readers the results of much painstaking research in this field.

The first mention I have been able to find of Jekyl Island occurs in a report made to Queen Elizabeth in 1587, by Sir Francis Drake. This gallant admiral had captured and mercilessly plundered the Spanish towns of Saint Jago, Cartagena and Saint Augustine, and after leaving the last named point, sailed northerly along the coast for some hundreds of miles. His report to Queen Elizabeth runs thus:

"On the 17th we took an observation, and found ourselves in latitude 30 deg. 30 min. N., and near a large island, which we felt sure was the land where we had information of a Spanish settlement of magnitude. Seeing some log houses, we decided to make a landing. We unfurled the standard of Saint George and approached the shore in great force, that we





SIR FRANCIS DRAKE.

*From the portrait by Titian now in the gallery of the Marquis of Queensberry.*



might impress the enemy with the great puissance of your Majesty. The accursed Spaniards, concealed behind the trees, fired upon us, and a sore and cruel fight seemed pendent, when the enemy, stricken with fear, incontinently fled to their homes, with their habiliments of war. One of our men was sorely wounded by the Spanish Captain, whom we presently made prisoner, and, having set up a gallows, we there hanged him in a chain by the middle, and afterwards consumed with fire, gallows and all.

To us was the good God most merciful and gracious, in that he permitted us to kill eighteen Spaniards, bitter enemies of your sweet Majesty. We further wasted the country and brought it to utter ruin. We burned their houses and killed their few horses, mules and cattle, eating what we could of the fresh beef and carrying the rest aboard our ships. Having in mind the merciful disposition of your gracious Majesty, we did not kill the women and children, but having destroyed upon the island all their provisions and property, and



taken away all their weapons, we left them to starve.

In view was another considerable island, fifteen miles to the northward, concerning which we asked of the women if any Spaniards dwelt thereon. The women were most ungracious, sullen and obstinate, perchance from their husbands having been killed before their eyes, and wickedly refused to answer us, but after we had burned a hole with a hot iron through the tongue of the most venomous of their number, they eftsoons told us that there were no Spaniards upon the other island; that it was the haunt of a solitary Frenchman named Jacques, who claimed it as his own, and that from him it was known as 'Jacques Ile.' Fearing that the women, instigated by the devil, were deceiving us, we visited the other island, with the holy determination to exterminate any enemies of your sacred Majesty thereon, but found the story of the women was true. The Frenchman Jacques had a hut near the water, where he lived with an Indian pagan as his wife. He had a liberal store of turtle's



eggs, gathered in the sand, which we took from him, as also his carbine and forty pounds of ambergris, which he had collected from the sea, but did him no further harm. We took here another observation, finding the latitude 31 deg. 10 min. N."

The latitude mentioned by Drake indicates that he visited first what is now known as Cumberland Island, and later, Jekyl Island, the name by which the latter island is known being evidently a corruption of its early cognomen, the transition from Jacques Ile to Jekyl being easy and natural.

The next mention I find relative to Jekyl Island occurs in a volume published by Wm. Dampier, in 1729, entitled, "Two Voyages to the Bay of Campeachy." This eminent navigator, author and pirate, set out from Virginia in 1684, on a buccaneering expedition against the Spanish settlements. He says:

"The next morning, being now nearly arrived at the Florida coast, we landed upon an island in latitude 31 deg. 12 min. N. for a supply of fresh water."



The latitude indicates the location of Jekyl Island. Dampier continues:

“Near the spot where we landed we found an abundance of fresh water and also a few huts, which were inhabited by peaceable savages. Much surprised were we to find that they spoke a language in which were found occasionally French words. We soon learned that they were largely the descendants of a Frenchman who had long before lived upon the island and married many Indian wives. From him the place was called ‘Jacques Island.’ The natural depravity of the pagans appeared, as we noticed that the French words were few in their usual conversation, but that they had hoarded many French curses and bitter profanities, which they heaped upon us as we left the island, for no other reason, as we could conjecture, except that we had taken with us their cattle, weapons, furs, provisions and other articles which might be useful to us thereafter.”

After this landing of Dampier, I find scanty mention of Jekyl Island prior to the founding of the Georgia colony under General Jas. E.



Oglethorpe, in 1733. The first settlement was at the present site of the city of Savannah, but later, General Oglethorpe determined upon Saint Simon's Island as the most advantageous location for a colony. There are three large islands off the Georgia coast: Cumberland, already mentioned as the landing place of Sir Francis Drake, is the most southerly; north of this is Jekyl Island, and still further north is the Island of Saint Simons. Both the other islands are plainly visible from Jekyl. To be near his settlement of a large colony on Saint Simon's Island, and still to have the isolation and dignity proper to the gubernatorial state, Oglethorpe selected Jekyl as his own residence, and built there a commodious mansion of logs. Lady Oglethorpe, in one of her letters, speaks of having brought from the mainland and planted near the family mansion some roots of yellow jessamine, not indigenous to the island, and the fact that a quantity of this jessamine is still growing near the solitary chimney already mentioned, although not found elsewhere upon the island, is confirmatory of the



legend that this chimney marks the spot where stood the baronial log castle of the Oglethorpes.

General Oglethorpe was a soldier of tried and unquestioned valor, an educated and accomplished gentleman of great ability and pleasing address, to whose manly and martial figure scant justice is done in the otherwise admirable statue belonging to the Century Club of New York.

Prior to the founding of the Georgia colony the island appears to have been only occasionally visited by hunters or fishermen, and after this date the change of the original name, "Jacques Isle," to Jekyl, seems to have become generally recognized, the island being always spoken of as Jekyl in the correspondence and documents of Governor Oglethorpe.

After the founding of the Georgia colony, the records of the island are for some time reasonably complete. For the data to which I will have time to refer at present, I am almost entirely indebted to the courtesy of Colonel Jefferson Davis Twiggs, the Secretary



of the Georgia Historical Society, and a son of the General Twiggs, whose gallantry and bravery were conspicuous in the war with Mexico. The collection of manuscripts and public documents relative to the early settlement of the State is large, and fortunately escaped the destruction which befell so many similar collections during the civil war.

The Georgia colony was originally organized as a home for unfortunate but industrious and worthy people. The first prospectus stated that, as colonists, all idle and vicious people would be excluded, as also all married men disposed to leave their families behind. Slavery was forbidden. Among the people afterward notable, connected with the early settlement, were Charles and John Wesley and George Whitefield. Charles Wesley was sent as secretary to General Oglethorpe and John as a missionary to the Indians. On the return of John to England, in 1737, Whitefield was sent by the trustees to take his place.

When General Oglethorpe established himself on Jekyl Island with his family, secretary



and servants, the island became virtually the capital of the Georgia colony. Both General and Lady Oglethorpe and the secretary often visited Savannah, which, with the country about it, continued to be the principal center of population as long as Oglethorpe remained in America, which was for a period of ten years. This period, from 1733 to 1743, is the romantic and picturesque period in the history of the island, as the plan of General Oglethorpe to make Saint Simon's Island the principal settlement, and Jekyl Island the government headquarters, was not carried out, and Jekyl Island, after his return to England, seems to have been substantially abandoned. Nearly all evidences of the occupation of the island were dissipated by time, and the island itself was practically deserted for the greater part of a century.

Among the manuscripts preserved in the archives of the Georgia Historical Society are various regulations prescribed by General Oglethorpe for the government of the colony, and considerable correspondence passing between





LADY DOROTHY OGLETHORPE.

*Reproduced from the miniature on ivory by Gainsborough,  
now in the possession of Francis Bartlett, Esq., of Boston.*



himself, his secretaries and Lady Oglethorpe, which are of interest as illustrating the experiences and hardships connected with the period of this first occupation of Jekyl Island.

In 1734 Lady Oglethorpe writes to her husband, then absent at Savannah. She says:

“Since your departure, my dearest husband, all the pigs have escaped into the dreadful wilderness about us, and we fear daily that they will be captured and eaten by the savages. The Chief, Altamaha, and his band, are still upon the island, and yesterday he came and begged tobacco and sugar, and also demanded of me our maid servant Elizabeth as his wife, much to her astonishment and terror. He was dressed in all his barbaric finery, painted and bedaubed in as many colors as the coat of Joseph, and decorated with feathers, bears' claws and bright colored shells, as befitted a man equipped for female conquest. The wretched pagan has already three wives, whom he treats worse than beasts of burden, and I think this somewhat influenced Elizabeth, as, had he been unmarried, the prospect of being



a queen, even of the wild and savage Tuscaroras, might have moved her. These Indians are soon to return northward, as the Choctaws claim the country hereabout, and the Tuscaroras, while boasting to fear nothing, yet love their own scalps to remain where the good God placed them.

During your absence I have again been troubled by a slight but authentic attack of the gout, and long unceasingly for your return."

In 1736, when Lady Oglethorpe was in Savannah, Charles Wesley writes her from Jekyl Island thus:

"I have but this day returned from the trip to the Ogeechee River, where I suffered many hardships and privations from the inhospitable weather. With my brother John, I preached to the Indians, whenever we could find them in any considerable numbers, although I fear but little impression was made upon them. Their simple and untutored minds find difficulty in comprehending the beautiful doctrine of the Trinity, or in realizing the sublimity of a pure and sinless Saviour suffering untold agonies



for the crimes of wicked men. One of these pagans, whose mind had been heretofore in total darkness, when urged to become a Christian, retorted that Christians lied and cheated when buying furs and were drunkards, and said that, as these men were Christians, he would none of it, so hardened by the wiles of Satan are these unbelievers against the truths of the gospel.

“Last evening I wandered to the north end of the island and stood upon the narrow point, which your ladyship will recall as there projecting into the ocean. The vastness of the watery waste, as compared with my standing place, called to mind the briefness of human life, and the immensity of its consequences, and my surroundings inspired me to write a hymn, commencing:

Lo! on a narrow neck of land,

‘Twixt two unbounded seas I stand,

which I trust may pleasure your ladyship, weak and feeble as it is when compared with the songs of the sweet psalmist of Israel. I feel that here, like Moses, I am a stranger in a



strange land, and I pray hourly that when the night cometh, and when deep sleep falleth upon me, I may not be found without a wedding garment."

Extracts from a letter from John Wesley to General Oglethorpe illustrate some of the early experiences of this noted evangelist. He says:

"After leaving Jekyl Island came a most wearisome journey of five days through swamps and forests, when we reached the place for the annual council of the Choctaws, and found the savages gathered in great numbers. As I gazed upon the multitude of idolaters, to whom I would fain be the messenger bearing the good tidings of great joy, I was filled with a deep pity for their unhappy state, and, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, felt to gladly labor until I enter the house appointed for all the living, to bring them within the fold purchased for a sin-laden world. I had with me as interpreter the half-breed, Mary Musgrove, and daily had meetings for instruction and prayer, and trust that the future may show that some of the seed thus sown has fallen upon good



ground. One woman was baptized. She was of those which come out of great tribulation, her husband and all her three children having been drowned four days before in crossing the Ogeechee River, and her happiness in the gospel caused me to feel that, like Job, the Master had caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. She was again married the day following her baptism, and when I suggested longer days of mourning, she only replied that her first husband was surely dead, and that his successor was of much substance, having a cornfield and a gun. I have acquired sundry words of the language of the Choctaws, and long to be able to speak to them in their mother tongue. I doubt the interpreter, Mary Musgrove, who is yet in the valley and shadow of darkness. To speak to the idolatrous Choctaws in the English language is as the crackling of thorns under a pot; is as one who would essay to draw out the Leviathan with a hook; who should seek to bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion.

Verily the flesh is weak, for I cannot but



long for the day when again I may visit you and enjoy the flesh-pots of Jekyl Island. I can with difficulty eat the food of the savages. Insects bite and destroy my sleep. I am as a skeleton, and the evil one continually suggests that I murmur at my lot, and seek an easier way in which to serve the Lord."

In 1736 came to John Wesley the experience of an earthly love, but the woman who was its object married another, and this disappointment caused the great evangelist to free his mind as to the woman and her husband in such language that he was indicted for libel, and fled to England to escape imprisonment, whereupon George Whitefield was chosen by the trustees as his successor, and arrived at Jekyl Island in 1737.

In further illustration of early life upon the island, I copy one of the letters of Lady Oglethorpe to Sir Theophilus, the father of her husband.

"DEAR AND HONORED PARENT:

I take my pen in hand to inform you that my dear husband and myself are well and I



hope these few lines may find you in the enjoyment of the same great blessing. We are now established in our new home on Jekyl Island, and I would fain give you a picture of this abode of the Governor of this promising colony. The mansion is built of pine logs, plastered, where plastered at all, with clay, and surrounded by a dense forest. The house is very large and commodious, but lacking many of the conveniences of our pleasant home in Surrey. We sleep on beds made of pine leaves, which are most comfortable and exhale a balsamic fragrance supposed to be conducive to health. Our floors are of split pine logs, and about the walls are wooden pegs upon which to hang our gowns. Much of our china was broken on our journey hither, and we use instead the pewter mugs and plates brought for our servants. A few red savages are near us, living in wigwams, who beg often for tobacco, but bring us in return an abundance of venison and fish. The secretary of the colony, Charles Wesley, dwells with us upon the island, and is zealous to save the souls of the Indians who come hither to



hunt and to fish. He baptized a week since one Indian and made him a part of Christianity, but later, for what reasons we cannot divine, though certainly through evil temptations of the father of idolatry, the devil, he suddenly cast off the Christian religion and abandoned the true, divine worship. Mr. Wesley has also the gift of verse, and has written many sweet hymns, which we sing in our family worship. Last week came several cloudy and dismal days, which he reported to us had inspired him to write a hymn contrasting the shadowed life here with the brightness of that which is to come. It begins thus:

No need of the sun in that day  
Which never is followed by night,  
Where Jesus's beauties display  
A pure and a permanent light.

A few days later he wrote another, after a most brilliant sunset, which we had all surveyed with delight:

With glorious clouds encompassed round,  
Whom angels dimly see,  
Will the unsearchable be found,  
Or God appear to me.



From these lines you will see his readiness to draw instructive lessons from all the incidents of daily life, although, as you will see later, sometimes his hymns come near to involve him in trouble.

He is of much self-denial and oftentimes of almost ascetic life, as appears from one of his hymns commencing,

I do suspect some danger nigh  
When I do feel delight.

From what I have written, you must not infer that we live altogether a lonely and quiet life. We have twice visited Charleston, the principal city of South Carolina, where we have been sumptuously entertained by the governor and principal citizens, whom we have, of course, invited to visit us in return. Recently we received word that our invitations would be accepted. We had informed them of our primitive mode of life, which they fully realized, having been in similar conditions themselves. Last Wednesday we were startled by a long blast from a conch shell, and on going to the beach saw a large party approaching in a flat



boat, men, women, negroes, horses and dogs. They were soon disembarked and at the house, where General Oglethorpe made them welcome with an abundance of rum made by the Puritans in that part of America called New England. They then told us that not to overtax our hospitalities, they had brought with them an abundance of food and servants, and proposed to go at once to some suitable place upon the shore and roast oysters. We set out for a cove about a mile distant from our home. The progress towards it was a striking and curious pageant. First, marched as trumpeter, a stalwart negro, blowing a conch shell and producing a dismal and incessant blare. Then General Oglethorpe on horseback, with myself behind him on a pillion, and a negro on a mule, carrying my best hat in a box, lest it be destroyed by the trees and bushes. Then our family coach, with one wheel missing from an encounter with a stump, the axle being held up by a pole, and within the family of Governor Pickens, his wife, sister and a niece, Miss Mercy Pickens. Then two open wagons with the



other ladies of the party, and some jugs of rum and boxes of food. About these rode the gentlemen on horses and mules, among them Mr. George Moultrie, a gallant young man who is soon to wed Miss Mercy before named. Around the cavalcade swarmed the negroes, shouting and laughing, rolling their white eyes, and showing their white teeth in contrast to their shining black skins, and singing songs full of melody and pathos. They seemed to bear the names of all the heathen divinities and historic heroes. I recall Diana, Flora, Phyllis, Cæsar, Pompey, Hannibal, Jupiter, and many more.

The road to the beach, while rude and rough for vehicles by reason of roots and stumps, is of wonderful beauty, bordered with great growths of evergreen oaks and magnolias, with thickets of myrtle and bay, and a carpet of dwarf palmetto, all of most lustrous green, and the trees often festooned or bound together with trailing garlands of pale, gray moss. The most perfect art could devise nothing more beautiful than the tropical glories of this forest



drive. When we reached the cove the negroes waded into the water and brought ashore great baskets of oysters, which they roasted in a fire kindled from branches of the fragrant pine. General Oglethorpe brewed a large tub of rum punch, while I made a bowl of delicious sanguaree with wine from your own cellar, which has been with us from the time of our leaving dear old England. No one neglected these beverages, and with the oysters, the cheese and other viands with which we were provided, a royal banquet was enjoyed. Many of the gentlemen were nearly overcome with the rum punch, although insisting that it was the roasted oysters which made their legs unsteady, and this had nearly led Mr. Wesley into serious trouble with Mr. Moultrie, whose almost maudlin attentions to his sweetheart, Miss Mercy, were constant and even annoying to her.

As Mr. Wesley drank no punch, they insisted he should sing, and he commenced one of his hymns which is a favorite with us:

"Depth of mercy, can there be  
Mercy still reserved for me?" —



"Hold," shouted Mr. Moultrie, "none of your damned presumption. Mercy is not reserved for you or any of your kind. She is mine and mine alone." General Oglethorpe interfered and endeavored to explain, but Mr. Moultrie would listen to nothing, and proposed to give the Secretary a drubbing on the spot. I succeeded in quieting him, and asked Mr. Wesley to substitute another hymn, whereupon he commenced:

"The day of jubilee is come,  
Return ye ransomed sinners home."

"What!" shouted my husband, "are you ordering away my guests on their very arrival? None of your foolishness." "Sir," said Mr. Wesley, "I was not addressing your guests. I do not consider them as ransomed sinners."

"What do you mean?" said Governor Pickens; "go and drum your nonsense into the woolly head of the negroes."

The riot was presently at an end, Mr. Wesley returning to the house, and was forgotten after the gentlemen had slept off their potations.

The party remained with us for three days,



and until the rum was exhausted, the gentlemen hunting daily and the ladies riding about the island and telling us all the gossip and scandals of Charleston. The hunters brought in an abundance of game, and this was cooked and served by the negro servants brought with our visitors, whose skill made us almost regret General Oglethorpe's determination that no slaves shall be held in the Georgia colony.

No more at present from your dutiful daughter,

DOROTHY OGLETHORPE."

I will conclude with extracts from two letters of George Whitefield to General Oglethorpe, written with an interval of about thirty years between, which illustrate a curious phase in the life of this famous preacher. Whitefield, soon after his arrival in Georgia, built what he called an Orphanage, an institution where poor and neglected children could be cared for, educated and fitted for useful lives. During his subsequent years this institution was his constant care; he solicited money for it in all his fields of labor. In 1739 he writes to Gen-



eral Oglethorpe thus, he being at that time in Savannah :

"I have just this day reached Jekyl Island, after an absence of three weeks, the most of which time was spent at the Orphanage and in its vicinity. The dear children are well and happy. Last February I decided to plant a farm, with the view of using the gain therefrom to carry forward the work of the Orphanage. I am more than ever convinced of the wisdom of excluding slavery from the Georgia colony. Slavery is the sum of all villainies and abominations, and could I secure money in other ways, I would never touch again the contributions from the Carolinas and Virginia, made by the slave owners, whose wealth is gained from the unpaid labor of wretched negroes or by the infamous traffic in human flesh. Scarcely shall such men inherit eternal life. The gates of the celestial city shall rarely open to those who traffic in the bodies and souls of men. They have made a covenant with death and with hell they are at agreement.

I hired several people who had no homes or



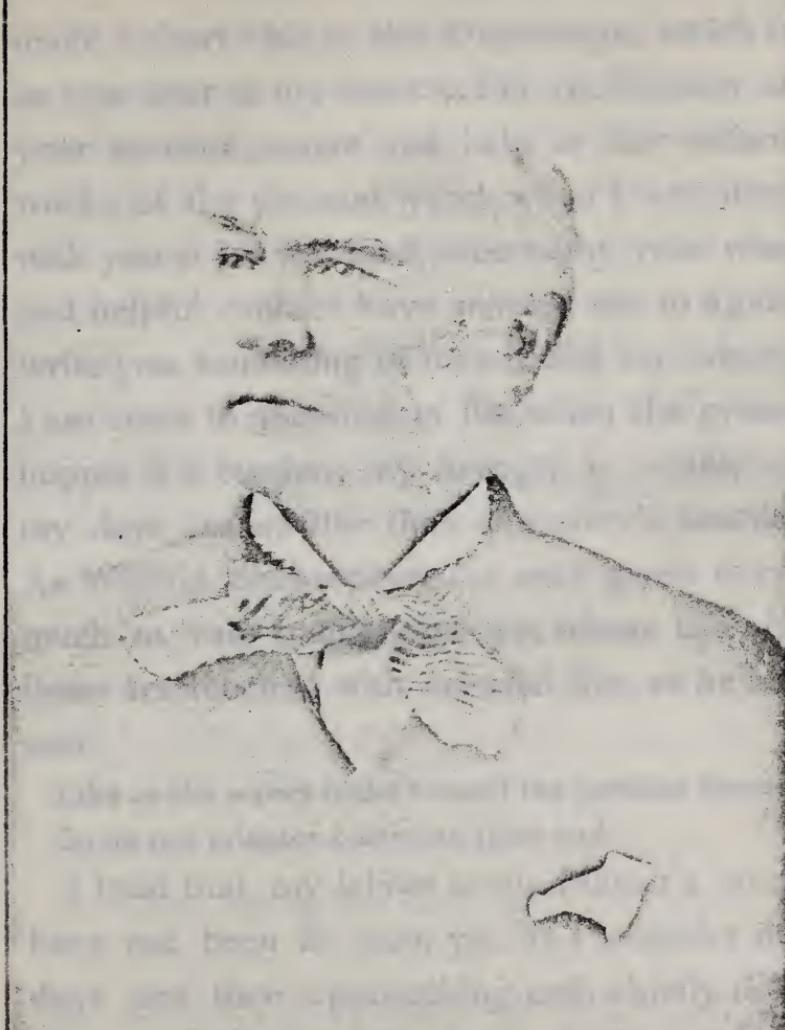
employment to cultivate the plantation, and now that the crops are gathered, I am in despair to find that there is no gain, but a loss. The Master hath said, the laborer is worthy of his hire, but the wages of the workman absorb the value of the harvest and more. I entered upon the work with lofty hopes, but pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off."

Nearly thirty years after the writing of this letter, and near the close of Whitefield's life, I find another letter from him to General Oglethorpe. The General had long before returned to England. Whitefield had spent the intervening years in public work, having seven times crossed the Atlantic, preaching with wonderful effect in all parts of the New World, but having always in mind his Orphanage, for which he constantly labored and solicited aid. The letter runs thus:

"MY DEAR AND HONORED FRIEND:

I am but now returned from a trip through Virginia and the Carolinas, during which I





REV. GEORGE WHITEFIELD.

*From the portrait by William Hogarth, owned by the  
Century Club of New York.*



made a short visit to the Orphanage, which is as ever dear to my heart. The recollection of your encouragement and help in this valiant work; of the pleasant years when I was often with you at Jekyl Island, cheered by your wise and helpful counsel, have minded me to again write you something of myself and my labors. I am come to the time in life when the grasshopper is a burden; my strength is weakness, my days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle. As William Shakespeare—a man given overmuch to vain imaginings, yet whose lips oft-times are touched with celestial fire, as he has said:

Like as the waves make toward the pebbled shore,  
So do our minutes hasten to their end.

I trust that my labors in the Master's work have not been in vain, yet, as I consider my days and their approaching end, chiefly do I value myself upon the many children whom the dear Orphanage has transformed from impending lives of vice and sin to faithful servants of the Master. Three years since a Carolinian,



who at one of our meetings had found the pearl of great price, gave me three healthy negroes, told me of the great gain in the cultivation of tobacco, and that a tobacco plantation would of itself nearly maintain the Orphanage. I took the money which had been contributed for the good work, bought a small plantation in South Carolina, as slavery was forbidden in Georgia, bought also nine other strong negro men and women, and planted tobacco. My agent has each year secured bountiful crops. The Lord has abundantly blessed our labors. The negroes work from sunrise to sunset in the fields, and by moonlight cultivate the maize, which is their food. The clothing for all costs scarcely a pound in the year, and having to pay them no wages nor to buy them food, the results are most hopeful. Daily and nightly do I praise the Lord for these bountiful harvests, and pray that He whose mercy endureth forever may continue to bless our fields, and to cause the labor of these negro slaves to bear abundant fruit in the salvation of the many little ones



who are ready to perish. Verily the word fitly spoken by my adviser of the tobacco plantation has been as apples of gold in pictures of silver.

But, my friend, long and dearly loved, I must come to an end. Perchance no more shall I gaze into thy eyes and grasp thy hand upon this earth; with me the fashion of this world passeth away, but the love which is stronger than death is my stay and my comfort forever."

It has been with me a labor of love to rescue from undeserved oblivion some few of the incidents in what may be termed the halcyon days of Jekyl Island. During my stay at the Club House, and since, in conversation with the members, I have found no one who had searched out, or was in any way familiar with, the period of its occupation by Oglethorpe. Even the vague tradition that it had been thus occupied was often questioned. But even the meagre glimpse which I have been able to afford of these picturesque ten years gives to the spot a much needed historic interest. Instead of be-



ing, as generally believed, an island, dull and uninviting, where a few negroes had cultivated and then abandoned small cotton fields, and where a pleasant winter climate was its sole excuse for being, it is seen to be linked with events romantic and far reaching in our national life. We may in imagination picture General Oglethorpe and his lovely wife entertaining with royal hospitality the thirsty governors of North Carolina and South Carolina, with their escort of fair women and brave men. Through the majestic groves of pine, oak and magnolia, and across the broad savannas, we may see the brilliant array of huntsmen gaily caparisoned, following their hounds, while the cheering bugle blasts echo far and away through the forest. We see the huntsmen returning home with brush and game, welcomed by the courtly dames as became a gallant and victorious band of warriors; and as the sun goes down we may see the powdered heroes leading through the mazes of the stately minuet, on the floor of logs, the ladies, brave in ruff, brocade and farthingale.



Under the fragrant pines we may see the council of war, as General Oglethorpe with his subordinates plans the brilliant though unsuccessful campaign against the Spanish city of St. Augustine. Here, too, we see the youthful Wesley, the founder of Methodism, scarcely yet conscious of his mission and destiny as he wanders dreamily along the shores of the sounding sea, brooding the problems of profoundest moment, or shaping the sacred hymns, which have since, in all climes and tongues, been the consolation of humanity. And here, too, we see George Whitefield, the most entrancing pulpit orator of the last two centuries, seeking often, after his conflict with the hosts of sin, rest for body and mind in the forests of Jekyl Island; and, among the same wide-spreading evergreen oaks, gray with their trailing garlands of moss, under which we may wander to-day, nursing for the life-long battle his fascinating and magical eloquence. Surely, Prospero, waving anew his magic wand, could never summon from the vasty deep an island more historically picturesque.

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